IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A water box assembly for an underwater pelletizer having a rotating shaft with cutting blades for cutting extruded pellets against a die plate coupled to an extruder housing, which comprises:

a generally cylindrical water box main body having a longitudinal chamber surrounding said rotating shaft and having a flange on an inner periphery nearest said housing; and

an annular section coupled between said water box main body and said die plate and secured to said housing by a first plurality of fastening elements, said die plate interfacing directly with said cutting blades, said flange of said water box main body coupled to said annular section with a second plurality of fastening elements so that said water box main body can be released from said annular section, die plate and housing by said second plurality of fastening elements, said annular section including a plurality of substantially circular through-passing apertures for receiving said first and second pluralities of fastening elements which pass therethrough.

2. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said second plurality of fastening elements are fewer in number than said first plurality of fastening elements.

3. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said annular section is sealingly connected to said die plate and said water box main body is sealingly connected to said annular section but is detachable therefrom without breaking said sealing connection between said annular section and said die plate.

4. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said first and second pluralities of fastening elements are interspersed around a circumference of said annular section.

5. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said first plurality of fastening elements are flush with or recessed within an outer face of said annular section which sealingly adjoins an inner face of said flange.

6. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 5, wherein said flange includes a plurality of substantially circular apertures for receiving said second plurality of fastening elements, said flange overlying and covering said first plurality of fastening elements.

7. (Currently Amended) A water box assembly for a pelletizer having a die plate with extrusion orifices therein coupled to a housing, a driven rotary cutter blade hub supported in opposed relation to said die plate, at least one cutter blade mounted on said blade hub and moving in a plane generally parallel to and closely adjacent said die plate to cut strands of material extruded through said orifices into pellets, said water box assembly comprising a water box main body and an inline adapter defining a cutting chamber adjacent said die plate and enclosing said cutter blade hub and cutter blade, said inline adapter sealingly connected to said die plate and said water box main body sealingly connected to said inline adapter in use but detachable therefrom for access to said cutter blade hub without breaking said sealing connection between said adapter and said die plate, said water box main body being connected to said inline adapter by a plurality of elongated fastening elements,

each of said elongated fastening elements passing through a corresponding plurality of substantially circular aligned apertures in a flange of said water box main body, in said inline adapter and in said die plate such that each fastening element interconnects all three of said water box main body, said inline adapter and said die plate.

8. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein said adapter is generally in the shape of an annular ring.

9. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 8, wherein said inline adapter annular ring has a surface which mates with a corresponding surface of a flange on said water box main body for said sealing connection thereto.

10. (Currently Amended) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein said inline adapter is sealingly connected to said die plate by a further plurality of fastening elements, each of said further plurality of fastening elements extending through and/or into aligned apertures in said inline adapter, said die plate and said housing for interconnection thereof.

11. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 10, wherein said plurality of fastening elements connecting said water box main body to said adapter comprise a plurality of studs secured at first ends thereof in a flange of an extruder inlet housing and extending outwardly therefrom.

12. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 10, wherein said inline adapter includes a further plurality of substantially circular apertures for receiving said further plurality of fastening elements, said further plurality of fastening elements being flush with or recessed within an outer face of said inline adapter which sealingly adjoins said flange on said water box main body.

13. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 12, wherein said water box main body flange overlies and covers said further plurality of fastening elements.

14. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 10, wherein said further plurality of fastening elements is greater in number than the plurality of fastening elements connecting said water box main body to said adapter.

15. (Currently Amended) A water box assembly for an underwater pelletizer adjacent a die plate at an end of an extruder inlet housing which comprises an inline adapter, a water box main body, a first plurality of fastening elements fastened between said extruder inlet housing and said adapter, each of said first plurality of fastening elements passing through and/or into aligned apertures in each of said housing, said die plate and said inline adapter to sealingly connect together said extruder inlet housing, said die plate and said inline adapter, and a second plurality of fastening elements fastened between said extruder inlet housing and said water box main body, each of said second plurality of fastening elements passing through and/or into aligned apertures in each of said water box main body, said inline adapter, said die plate and said housing to sealingly connect together said water box main body and said housing with said die plate and said inline adapter therebetween, ~~said second plurality of fastening elements being fastened between said extruder inlet housing and said water box main body through aligned holes around a periphery of both said die plate and said inline adapter~~.

16. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 15, wherein said water box main body can be disconnected from said inline adapter by releasing said second plurality of fastening elements.

17. (Original) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 15, wherein said first plurality of fastening elements are fastened between said extruder inlet housing and said adapter through holes around the periphery of said die plate.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently Amended) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein said fastening elements pass through said plurality of substantially circular aligned apertures in said flange, said inline adapter and said die plate and extend into ~~an~~ said extruder inlet housing adjacent said die plate.

20. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said plurality of substantially circular apertures includes a first plurality of aligned holes and a second plurality of aligned holes, said first and second

plurality of fastening elements passing through said first and second plurality of aligned holes, respectively.

21. (Previously Presented) The water box assembly as set forth in claim 20, wherein said second fastening elements are fastened between said extruder housing and said water box main body through said second plurality of aligned holes.